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SUBJECT: NORTH SULAWESI: GROWING PROBLEMS IN HIV AND TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

This message is sensitive, but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

1. (SBU) Summary: The head of a local NGO in Manado described the growing problem of HIV and trafficking in women during Surabaya Principal Officer's recent visit. In a city that prides itself on beginning strongly Christian, prostitution has been forced further underground, making monitoring the incidence of HIV difficult. Trafficking volume has increased in recent months for reasons that remain unclear. Local officials, however, turn a blind eye to the problem, despite sufficient anti-trafficking legislation. End Summary.

HIV

2. (SBU) During a September 25-27 trip to Manado, North Sulawesi, Surabaya Principal Officer met with Dr. Jane Pangemanan, Director of "Sahabat Perempuan," a local NGO dedicated to improving the health of women and children in the province. Established in 1999 by women activists in Manado to mitigate the increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS in the region, Sahabat Perempuan has since expanded its activities to include combating trafficking in persons. According to Dr. Pangemanan, there are at least known 1,890 HIV cases in North Sulawesi, but the provincial government has little interest in the issue.

3. (SBU) Unlike other urban areas, where prostitutes ply their trade in concentrated areas of town, Manado prostitutes are working in individual areas scattered throughout the area. Dr. Pangemanan explained that local officials want to promote Manado's reputation as a religious, Christian city. Obvious prostitution would undermine that image. As a result of local government regulation and enforcement, prostitution is forced further underground, making it more difficult for NGOs to monitor the spread of HIV and provide education about the dangers.

GROWING TIP PROBLEM

4. (SBU) According to Dr. Pangemanan, the volume of trafficking has increased dramatically since January. Previously, every month, two girls from North Sulawesi were trafficked to Papua, Jakarta, Batam (then to Singapore), Kalimantan, Malaysia and Japan; now it is more like two girls per week. According to Sahabat Perempuan's data, between January and September 2007, 80 girls had been trafficked. Dr. Pangemanan offered no specific insights into why the volume of trafficking was increasing, other than to note that Manado girls were considered very desirable in other parts of Southeast Asia. She added that while economic growth continued, the number of poor was also

increasing.

15. (SBU) Dr. Pangemanan explained that North Sulawesi has strong anti-trafficking laws, but enforcement is non-existent because local MPs and the Governor are only interested in issues that earn money. She criticized the current governor for ignoring the problems of HIV and trafficking, commenting that he spent too much time preparing for Manado to host a World Oceans Conference in 2009 to worry about local issues. The previous governor and his wife, she said, had been serious in their approach to these issues.

MCCLELLAND